PERIODICO EN ESPAÑOL ADENTRO

# CHALLENGE




THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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# WORKERS GO THE DISTANCE FOR FLORES AND THE FIGHTBACK




Los Angeles workers lead a bold action while maintaining social distancing. Actions like these show that we can still fight back under increasingly fascist conditions and protect one another.

**LOS ANGELES, APRIL 1**—As General Motors and General Electric bosses attempt to lead our class in the domestic war efforts to build all-class unity (aka fascism) under the guise of fighting Covid-19, the family of murdered-by-police Alex Flores continues to inspire some glimmers of working-class power.

There are constant calls from the bosses, appealing to our humanity, to donate blood to the Red Cross and give money to the numerous underfunded agencies that provide food and clothing to our class. Like World War II, the bosses aim to mobilize every aspect of society to move from donating blood and money to sacrificing "blood and treasure" in the name of U.S. imperialism and future World War III.

Our small fight alongside the Flores family offer not only a short-term solution but provides lessons on how we should be creatively fighting back in this period of pandemics, fascism, and future wars.

## Workers collectively make a plan

Around the same time that U.S. President Trump invoked the fascist Stafford Act, Progressive Labor Party and antiracist organizers were intending to meet with the Flores family for a BBQ and banner-making party. After a brief discussion with the family, the BBQ turned into an emergency planning meeting to discuss the nature of our fightback should conditions make it more difficult to meet in large groups.

Many workers are understandably frightened by the current situation. Nevertheless, the Flores family decided that day regardless of how the bosses try to restrict movement in the coming period, they wanted to find creative ways to continue the fight back!

We had a rich discussion on operating under fascist conditions, importance of public health precautions like hand hygiene and social distancing. We still didn't know at this point what the ruling class would implement in response to the virus, so we made three levels of plans based on how limiting the situation would become. Not only did the family want to continue the weekly protests, they agreed on expanding the struggle to weekly petitioning at neighborhood grocery stores and of course, and finishing the banner we didn't do that day!

## And boldly carry it out

A couple of days later, the governor of California, Gavin Newsome, followed by Los Angeles Mayor Garcetti, announced the

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# OUR FIGHT

✰Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

✰The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

✰Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

✰While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

✰Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

✰Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

✰Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

✰Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✰Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

✰Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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### WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

# Covid-19 accelerates bosses' drive towards fascism and war

Even with social distancing, we can see all too clearly the horrors created by the disease of capitalism. In a matter of weeks, Covid-19 has taken down the bosses' economies and exposed their health care system for the racist travesty it is. The pandemic has revealed—once again—the capitalists' criminal negligence and total incompetence. In a moment where workers are most vulnerable, they have perverted the practice of medicine into a rationed commodity. They have nothing to offer us but death panels and euthanasia.

Only the international working class has the capacity and humanity to rebuild a decent world out of this cataclysm. Only communism, a society run by and for workers, can meet the vital needs of our class.

As workers fight for their lives and their families and their safety and their jobs, the capitalist rulers are speeding their plans for fascism and inter-imperialist war. More openly fascist states like China and Russia are seizing the opportunity to line up new allies and possibly supplant the U.S. as the world's number-one superpower. Meanwhile, U.S. and European Union (EU) bosses are plagued by infighting and division. Regardless of which group of these blood-sucking monsters prevail, and no matter when the pandemic subsides, workers will still be sickened by the contagion of capitalist exploitation. Our class will still be plagued by racist and sexist inequality, by poverty and homelessness. The most deadly infection by far is the profit system itself.

But the bosses aren't the only ones who can advance in this period. So can the working class. Progressive Labor Party, though small and limited today, will continue to organize and grow until we are leading millions to turn the bosses' wars into communist revolution.

### Bosses' crumbs won't cut it

As the virus exposes the fragility of life under capitalism, U.S. bosses are trying to mask the horror. Frozen student loans, expanded unemployment insurance, suspended evictions, and $1,200 checks are so many crumbs to keep the rulers' consumer economy limping along—and to stave off rebellions in the streets. Soon enough, when the worst of this latest crisis has passed, the crushing debt payments and evictions will resume. Under capitalism, the law of the land is maximum profit—no matter how many are suffering in their homes or hospital death camps.

The rulers' response to Covid-19 has been muddled by internal divisions, a lack of discipline, and the anarchy of their system. In the U.S., the main split is between the imperialist Big Fascists of finance capital, represented by the Democratic Party, and the isolationist Small Fascists led by the Koch family and fronted by President Donald Trump. The Big Fascists, though struggling with their own disunity, are focused on building a broad, patriotic movement for their coming war with China—and demanding "sacrifice" from capitalists and workers alike. Behind House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, they are pressing Trump to use the Defense Production Act to compel private-sector production of millions of respirator masks and tens of thousands of ventilators, the equipment needed to save Coronavius patients with life-threatening lung injuries.

### It's not just Trump, it's capitalism

Trump reluctantly backed off his deranged plan to "get America back to work" by Easter Sunday, which would have guaranteed the slaughter







of additional millions and hurt his chances for reelection in November. But he is following the Small Fascists' playbook to limit the federal government's role and protect "free enterprise"—the bosses' freedom to steal all the short-term profits they can, and workers' lives be damned. After attacking state-imposed shelter-in-place restrictions, the Koch-controlled Americans for Prosperity urged Pelosi and Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell to "avoid approving measures that inappropriately usurp the roles that can be more effectively played by state and local governments, the private sector, and our communities" (americansforprosperity.org, 3/17).

Trump has complied by refusing to centralize purchasing and distribution of medical equipment, and by allowing six states—including Florida and Texas—to defy the urgent recommendations of every honest scientist to shut down public gatherings. Untold thousands of workers will die as a result.

But make no mistake. The Big Fascists and their political stooges, from Barack Obama to Joe Biden to Andrew Cuomo, are the mass murderers who placed workers at such grave risk in the first place. For decades, finance capitalists worldwide have gutted the health care infrastructure, a disinvestment that accelerated after the financial crisis of 2008. These main-wing liberals have closed unprofitable hospitals, slashed Medicaid, and purposely plotted the "triaging" of critical care—to enable the state to pull the plug on workers deemed expendable. Several besieged hospitals in New York City have already "taken the unprecedented step of allowing doctors not to resuscitate people with covid-19 to avoid exposing health-care workers to the highly contagious virus" (Washington Post, 3/31).

### U.S. and EU in retreat

The U.S. bosses' are no longer able to lead on the international stage. They couldn't convince their Saudi allies to end an oil war with Russia that has devastated prices and threatened the U.S. fracking industry (CNBC, 3/25). At the recent G7 Summit, after the U.S. State Department crafted a joint statement calling Covid-19 the "Wuhan virus," European leaders refused to sign off—a reflection of China's growing influence.

Meanwhile, the EU is fracturing internally. German Chancellor Angela Merkel's hesitance in helping poorer European countries was slammed by French President Emmanuel Macron (Reuters, 3/27). Italy, a country that last year defied the European Union by joining China's Belt and Road Initiative, received thousands of masks and the services of nine Chinese doctors (FP, 3/31). After getting its own pandemic aid package from China, Serbia claimed that "European Solidarity does not exist. It was a fairy tale" (Wall Street Journal, 3/18).

### China's bosses move in

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# Workers go the distance, potential for communism

*Continued from front page*

"Safer at Home" restrictions. This meant that you were only supposed to leave the house for "essential business," maintain six feet of distance and not be in groups larger than ten. But based on our planning, we were ready!

### Organize safety for workers' fightback

For the next Flores Friday march, we had a handwashing station and made a large circle spaced out to maintain adequate distance. We asked our veteran comrades of older age and/or with other underlying health conditions to stay home. We also had a bit more discipline at the march itself with one family member and one Party member discussing the plan with the larger group and leading the march.

We carried a printout of the "Safer at Home" order with someone designated to interact with the police should they approach us. We then marched in two lines staying six feet apart, seizing the southbound traffic, showing the community that we take their health seriously, but also that the fight against police terror and the larger system of capitalism cannot wait. Throughout it all, working-class support did not waver!

### Petition at grocery stores

Since, we have petitioned at two different grocery stores in the neighborhood. We washed our hands and wore latex medical gloves and did our best to have brief but moving discussions with workers and asking them to sign a petition with demands for justice for Alex (getting the autopsy report




and indicting racist KKKop Steven Ruiz) but also with broader demands calling for an end to racist police murders and attacks on our class.

Even with the lesser foot traffic from the fear around Covid-19, shoppers, grocery store workers and their security engaged as well, collecting over 150 signatures in just two visits. One grocery store worker shared with us that her brother was killed by the police in the city of Gardena in front of his son last year. We introduced her to the sister, brother and father of Alex Flores. She signed our petition, but also asked to be contacted. We are hoping to unite these two families and two struggles and hopefully strengthen our one fight against this whole racist capitalist system.

### Capitalism is the virus, communism is the cure

Whether it be the Covid-19 or police murder, workers know that capitalism is not here to serve our class. Every day this system exposes its true nature, killing people because of lack of ventilators in a hospital or by the hand of the killer cops. The Flores family's urgency to fight this rotten system exists in every member of our class when cultivated through the ideas of PLP.

As the bosses ramp up fascism, we must continue to learn to push the limits they set while also operating in new ways. With the Covid-19 crisis nowhere near its end, we must be ready to adjust tactics if orders for more serious lockdowns are put in place.

We value the health and welfare of every single worker. We cannot be reckless and put workers lives at risk. But when this health crisis subsides, capitalism will still be killing members of our class, so we can't go into hiding at this time either. No one is safe at home if bosses run the world! Workers need communism now more than ever! Join the fight!

As scientific communists, it's evident that social distancing and quarantining as it relates to halting the spread of disease is important. However, we also understand that the bosses' concerns for our collective health are only motivated by their own desire to make profit.

Not only that, we know that if we were running society, we would greatly reduce the possibility of pandemics we will arrange society completely different, with elimination of exploitation and profit. But if a pandemic were to develop under communism, a quarantine would not consist of weaponized technology or militarized camps, but it would be carried out with international camaraderie and compassion for our class sisters and brothers impacted around the world.✪

# Editorial: Fight the bosses' Covid-19 crisis, build communism

*Continued from page 2*

For the last half of the 20th century, U.S. imperialism dominated the globe and controlled world events. But after defeats in Vietnam and more recently the Middle East, and now hobbled by Trump and his Fortress America disengagement, its alpha dog status is in jeopardy. China's more unified ruling class enabled its bosses to contain Covid-19 with a brutal lockdown of 60 million workers. As a result, they've gotten a jump in restarting their own struggling economy.

China has exported thousands of ventilators to Europe (South China Morning Post, 3/31). It produces half of the world's face masks; billionaire Jack Ma sent testing kits and masks to over 50 African countries, and 50,000 testing kits to Mexico alone (El Universal, 3/31). The Council on Foreign Relations, U.S. finance capital's leading think tank, sounded the alarm: "As Washington falters, Beijing is moving quickly and adeptly to [fill] the vacuum to position itself as the global leader in pandemic response" (3/18).

### Workers' fightback rising

The pandemic has both widened the inequalities of capitalism and awakened working-class consciousness. Workers are fighting back! In Italy, they effectively shut down the country with a call for a national strike of non-essential workers (Politico, 3/15). In the U.S., Instacart and Whole Foods workers have struck against deadly working conditions. Auto workers in Michigan, bus drivers in Alabama, sanitation workers in Pittsburgh, chicken factory workers in Georgia, Amazon workers in New York—all have walked off the job to protest the bosses' callous disregard for their health and safety.

Mutual aid organizations have spontaneously sprung up in solidarity with workers whom the bosses have left to starve or die. In Paterson, New Jersey, activists delivered meals to more than 100 older people. Tenant rent strikes are brewing. PLP members are active in these groups, which evoke the old Communist Party's monumental mass work during the Great Depression of the 1930s. These actions give workers both confidence in our class and tangible support as the bosses' infrastructure crumbles around us.

There is no higher duty or privilege than serving fellow workers in need. But we must also advance politically beyond the old CP by winning masses of workers all the way to communism. In a communist society, workers will take collective responsibility for our class—out of commitment, not threats or coercion. Fight for communism! Smash the bosses! Join PLP!✪

**WE WANT YOU**

*to join the Progressive Labor Party!*

# Covid19: Transit workers' blood on bosses' hands

**NEW YORK CITY, April 1**—Up to now eight Metropolitan Transit Authority workers have died during the raging Covid-19 outbreak.

While their death certificates will determine the virus as cause of death, their real killers were the racist MTA New York City Transit and its inaction to protect its mostly Black and Latin workers from the disease! Given the MTA bosses callous response more will dies as the ink on this issue dries.

The deaths were avoidable. But what's it to the bosses if a few workers die in the line of duty, so long as the profit machine keeps rolling?

Capitalism has worked overtime to show the workers that our lives are expendable. Progressive Labor Party members working in the MTA continue building bonds with co-workers, and backing demands for MTA to provide sufficient proper protective equipment and sanitary facilities to keep us safe. Some MTA workers also demand housing for homeless workers on the trains— and end the racist cleaning disparities between stations in wealthier and more impoverished communities. At the same time though, none of that is enough. A new world is necessary so such deaths never happen again, either in the MTA, or anywhere else on this planet—communism.

### No protection

The deceased eight include bus operators, station cleaners, track workers, conductors, and bus maintainers.

One of the deaths occurred on March 28, when a train operator died of smoke inhalation, heroically giving his own life to bring his train and passengers into a station after reports that someone in the second car squirted accelerant onto a shopping cart and lit it on fire. Though he didn't die from Covid-19, capitalism and the increasingly unstable atmosphere it is creating with this disease brings out more anti-communist attacks by workers against other workers. Had the operator had protective gear against smoke, he likely would be alive today. But the MTA can't be bothered with that either.

### Transit lies, workers die

Until very recently, the MTA was refusing to provide PPE (proper protective equipment) to its front line workers against Covid-19—and lied about not having to offer it. In early March, they warned a train operator who wore one during his shift not to do so, because of "public perception." These bosses care more optics than workers' safety.They've failed to properly sanitize our train and bus operating positions and crew room facilities while launching a PR campaign to look as if they're cleaning the whole system. On transit Facebook pages, many subway train operators and conductors have posted pictures of dirty wipes after taking it upon themselves to clean.

Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 has admitted that at least one of these deaths could've been prevented if proper PPE had been distributed. But as the saying goes, a day late and a dollar short! Their acknowledgments won't bring back our deceased co-workers.

Local 100 has done the bare minimum to secure such protections for us. Even with the MTA agreeing to offer us some pathetic equipment after discussions, this union has shown it's willing to wait for workers to die before lifting a finger. Under capitalism, today's unions serve the bosses and crack the whip to keep workers in line and from revolting.

The masks MTA will now provide us with are not the recommended N95 masks, but instead flimsy surgical ones. This persists despite a 2012 pandemic memo the agency put out, mandating they stockpile a six week supply of N95 masks, hand sanitizer, and cleaning wipes for workers.

A visit to any train or bus reporting location for workers shows that any available sanitizer is in rare supply—save for the NY State issued one, made through racist, super-exploitative prion labor. And none of these locations are providing sanitary wipes.

### No testing kits for workers

Workers are also upset that MTA Chairman Patrick Foye, who recently contracted the virus, was able to get a test so quickly. Meanwhile we have to jump through hoops just to get one. The number of transit workers with the virus has quickly shot past 600, with over 3,330 ordered to self-quarantine after exposure, as of late March (New York Daily News, 3/31). The MTA's Covid 19 hotline has flooded with calls from workers worried about their health. Yet this was the same man who downplayed our concerns, now stricken with the same disease he has allowed to ravage us.

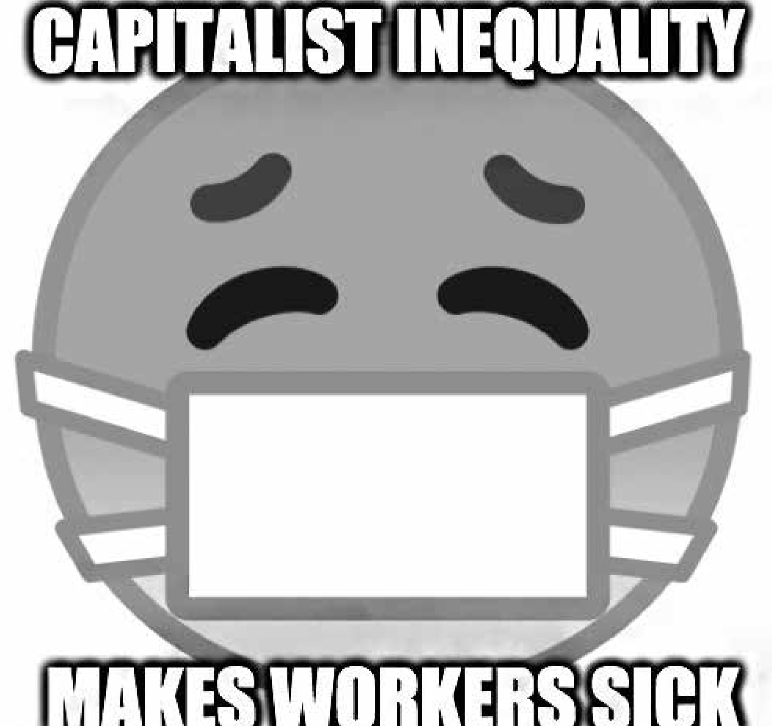
**Continued on page 7**

# Racist bosses hang hospitality workers out to dry

**CHICAGO, March 20** – The racist and sexist indifference of the capitalist bosses towards workers in the hospitality industry is making itself painfully clear as the devastation from the Covid-19 pandemic grows. Like all other industries under capitalism, it relies on the value stolen from the labor of workers employed for profits.

The hospitality and food service industry in general are major employers of millions of workers within the United States, many of them Black, Latin, Asian and immigrant women workers. Already workers in these industries have been subject to unpredictable schedules and low pay, and now that local government bosses are mandating that dine-in restaurants close (a proper public health precaution), they are further thrown into economic uncertainty.

During this pandemic, the bosses are terrified by the economic damage that is bound to occur to their businesses and can offer no plan to assist workers, aside from some crumbs and empty sympathy. More than ever, the international working class needs a communist society to help prioritize workers' health during moments of disaster and to ensure that we can all work as we are able and receive the resources that we need. The communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) is fighting to build that society.




### Bosses hang workers out to dry

Up until a few days ago, I worked at one of the many restaurants in Chicago closed due to the pandemic. As of last week, Illinois had 37 cases of Covid-19 and most people were in denial of the severity of the virus. Because I work with the public and have an underlying health condition, I was slightly worried about becoming ill. My concern was not irrational after all. Two days later, Illinois reported over 100 cases of Covid-19 and as a result, liberal Illinois Governor JB Pritzker (himself a billionaire) ordered all dine–in restaurants and bars closed – my place of employment being one of them.

This restaurant is part of a large restaurant group that owns over 120 restaurants and employs around 8,000 workers. Two days after Pritzker's order, every worker received a text message notifying us of an upcoming conference call that afternoon where the company president would be updating us on the current situation.

Although there were many people on the call, all the workers were muted and only the president's voice was heard – typical of the bosses. We listened as he notified us that most of us were immediately laid off and our insurance would be cut off in at the end of the month, however, partners would still be receiving half of their salary. He broke into tears as he explained that he did not know what would happen to the company. He along with the other bosses built an empire with our labor, laid us off, and now we are being subject to listening to him cry over the phone.

In the midst of a pandemic, thousands of workers will not only be devoid of income but they are also going to be without health insurance. Many of these workers are paid minimum wage or a hair above it and often have to fight to be scheduled enough hours to live.

Before the pandemic, my restaurant was so slow that we would close two extra days a week. My co-workers and I were already hurting financially. Internationally, millions of workers are being furloughed from their jobs. When this is over, many of us will not have jobs to go back to. When the bosses are faced with a financial loss, they will cut their ties with us without hesitation. My company, which must make tens of millions of dollars annually, started a GoFundMe for workers being most affected by this layoff. They are asking other workers to pay for the losses.

### Communist revolution is on the menu

As long as this capitalist system remains in place, the international working class will be expected to foot the bill for the crises that the system itself creates. But there can be a silver lining, in that many of those same workers most beat down by this racist and sexist profit system will become more open-minded to more cooperative and egalitarian alternatives.

Workers across the globe are starting to display a sense of solidarity through social media by sharing memes about how capitalism is the virus. Some say that we need socialism to fix everything; however, socialism is not enough. The international working class needs to be in complete control of its own destiny, controlling all means of production and using the wealth that we create from our labor to serve our own needs. The only solution is communist revolution, led by the PLP. Workers of the world, unite!✪

# Indiana celebrates International Working Women's Day




**INDIANA, March 8** – Over 30 workers gathered in celebration of International Women's Day (IWD) to learn about its history and various past and present anti-racist, anti-sexist women fighters. The theme for this year's event was "One United Working Class vs. Sexism."

The program was organized in order to collectively learn more about the fights against capitalism and sexism led by international working class women throughout history and the present. We also sought to collectivize building and strengthening our base in the area. It is important for us to continue to sharpen our line against anti-sexism and talk about waging this fight with our line as communists.

Those present were treated to a program that included a short video about the history of IWWD followed by discussion, interactive games, and personal comments from comrades about fighting back against sexism with communist unity. Examples were shared in an interactive timeline that highlighted historical worker-centered events, such as the 1866 creation of Mississippi's First Labor Union by the Washerwomen of Jackson. Also featured were the fightback against sexist violence in Chile and the nationalization of childcare in the Soviet Union under the Bolsheviks.

Each of these examples showed how women workers have given and continue to give fierce leadership to major struggles internationally. The event ended with us singing the Internationale.

### Communists fight sexism head on

The personal, political, and international experiences of various women workers was featured in the event. One worker gave a speech in Spanish about their experiences fighting against the corrupt government alongside her father in Mexico. When the comrade came to the U.S., she met members of PLP and realized that we were a group committed to fighting against injustice; not just talking about it.

She joined the Party and raised her children to also be active fighters against injustice. She ended by relaying her hopes for all the young girls in the room to never settle on bein "princesses," but rather s fighters in the battle against racism, sexism, and capitalism.

Another worker spoke about working in the hospitality industry and the intense sexism she experiences every day. She highlighted the capitalist attacks against women specifically in Indiana. For example,the maternal mortality rate is the second worst in the U.S. For every 100,000 live births, 50 white women die. This number is nearly doubled for Black women in the state (America's Health Rankings, 2019).

She stressed that capitalism is the reason why sexism and racism exist. This worker was introduced to the party through a persistent comrade who struggled with her, continued to get her the paper, and remained consistent. This is a reminder that what we do, the relationships we make and strengthen matter.

### Pushing our line and work forward

Contrary to the feminist idea that men are the source of sexism, the root cause of sexism is capitalism, and both women and men suffer from its inequalities and exploitations. Sexism is a tool of divide-and-conquer. While women are the main target of sexism, men are also hurt my sexist ideas and practices. For example, studies have shown that the pressure of misogyny is linked to increased depression and substance abuse among men (The Guardian, 2016).

This event showed us the importance of continuing to meaningfully connect with people and engage them with our politics. Of the 30 workers in attendance, almost half were yet-to-be members. This was an important revelation, showing that PLP's work is recognized and respected by others in the community.

It also showed that we must strengthen our political work and relationships. Taking these active steps will only lead to the liberation of the working class by building a communist world with a militant line and practice against sexism, racism, and capitalism. PLP continues to lead the way!✪

# Letters: Organizing and working under Covid-19

## Multiracial unity is the antidote to bosses' racist disease

A week before workers in New York was completely swept into the pestilent tornado of Covid-19, Progressive Labor Party (PLP) comrades and I organized a rally in Chinatown. When I invited workers from my mass work to the action some were opposed. They felt that rather than showing solidarity we are further contributing to racism. For some members in my base, having a rally in Chinatown sent a message that Covid-19 only hurts Chinese people. While their accusations were upsetting, the rally carried on at full force. We set up near one of the busiest intersections in Chinatown with signs in Mandarin and English. Though our numbers were small, we made up for it with a bold and multigenerational contingent of PL'ers of all races and crowd-rousing chants. Workers from a local bank gifted us bottles of water, and dozens of workers enthusiastically received CHALLENGE and leaflets.

The day after a rally, a few comrades and I met with some of the members in my base who disagreed, but were genuinely trying to understand the Party. There was confusion about the meaning of solidarity. Many confused it to mean superficial allyship and not working-class unity. After a long debate, comrades and I clarified that solidarity for communists means that we stand united in common struggle with the working class. And so our rally was politically necessary to show that multiracial unity is the antidote to the bosses racist divisions.

We also explained that our choice to have the rally in Chinatown was political. We did it to one show the connection between mushrooming fascism and inter-imperialist rivalry between the U.S. and Chinese bosses. Chinese workers in the U.S are inevitably caught in the middle of the bosses' crossfire, and so when the bosses spread their racist propaganda, it means that they're intensifying their attacks on our entire class.

This became even clearer in the wake of Covid-19 when the U.S bosses showed they were utterly unprepared. Our chants highlighted that there were no testing kits, no hospital beds. Cuts in care and infrastructure invariably means that Black, Latin, and Asian workers, as usual, would suffer the most. The crisis also exposed deepening exploitation: hand sanitizers were made using prison labor.

We exposed how Big Fascist stooges like NY governor Andrew Cuomo set the stage for the conditions that will lead to the butchering of our class on an epic scale. We wanted to motivate our class to unite and fight back rather than give in to the bosses' racist divisions.

These discussions helped my comrades and I sharpen the contradictions in our mass organization, and although the workers we talked to were not won, good things came out of it. We were successful in getting at least one worker from my mass organization to show up to the rally, and I even won a friend, a sharp young worker in my base, to translate our flyer into mandarin.

Organizing in the time of Covid-19 is difficult but if there is anything this experience has taught me is that even in the darkest nights there will always be sparks in the working class. You just have to keep struggling to find them.

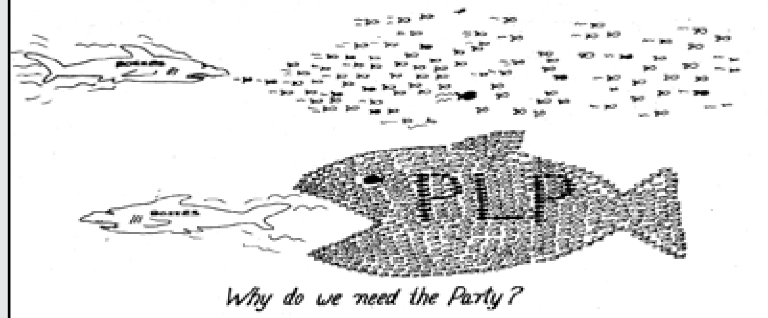
## Health care workers need communism

After a brief absence in the time of Covid-19, I returned to work at my community health center in the Bronx today. Despite the desperate situation workers in New York City are facing, I was uplifted by the camaraderie of my front line fellow health workers, nearly all of whom are Black and Latin women.

Most of these dedicated women have young families at home, and yet, despite often suboptimal work conditions, they selflessly show up to serve their community. As in the rest of New York, there is a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) for health workers, yet my co-workers quickly offered to locate gear for me. I was surprised when a young doctor took me down to the supply room and insisted they give me one of her personally assigned lab coats to wear to see patients. It was particularly touching given that the clinic had never given me a lab coat to wear in my 35 years of service there.

In the course of the day, I quickly realized that it was very difficult for workers to function and maintain the requisite 'social distancing' in the hallways and exam rooms. Everyone just did their best to do an optimal job and try to be safe. The clinic is just not set up to deal with a pandemic.

An encouraging moment for me was when I delivered our paper to several regular CHALLENGE readers. The issue sparked a lively discussion about how this profit system simply cannot provide for the working class. Perhaps these desperate times will at least help us illustrate more concretely, why my co-workers need to join Progressive Labor Party and fight for a communist world. Healthcare under this capitalist system is run by profit seeking corporations. Healthcare under communism would be run by and for the working class. Join us.



# LETTERS

*We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.*

## Immigrant workers organize vs. bosses racist bailout

Some comrades have been working in an immigrant-based community organization in New York City for many years. The Coronavius pandemic and the capitalists' racist response are causing death and panic in immigrant communities. Thirteen people have recently died at Elmhurst Hospital that serves immigrant workers and their families and is totally unequipped or staffed to deal with the magnitude of the crisis. Immigrant workers in the community organization are no longer working and many don't have pay, sick days or health insurance. Undocumented workers are also excluded from the "rescue" package. It's a choice between food and rent. Comrades have been calling our members and friends to tell them NOT to pay the April rent. Tenant groups have gotten a moratorium on evictions but not a rent freeze, which is unlikely given Cuomo's and other politicians' strong ties to the real estate goons. The fight will continue for many months!

A comrade recently made a small donation to a youth team in the organization that has been responding day and night to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) arrests and detentions during this crisis.

Two immigrant groups in New York City are mobilizing an action April 2-4 when people individually can throw signs from their windows, put up signs on windows and lamp posts, and do sidewalk art. A comrade has translated and texted this message to our friends. We have notified the leadership of the organization and the youth team.

The spirit of collectivity, pitching in for our class in the face of intensifying racism, is an inspiring example of what has been and is communist culture and practice. The fight for revolution, for communism, is desperately needed by the international working class. Join us in this fight for communism, a system without money and profits, without borders, firmly committed to obliterating pandemics, racism and sexism.

On to May Day, remote or not!

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## Bosses get bailed out for sickening workers

In late March the U.S. government passed a much-touted $2 trillion "rescue" package. Less touted is that at least half of the benefits go to real estate investors, big corporations and other businesses. Ninety-six senators voted, and all, including Bernie Sanders and every Democrat, supported the law. So who is actually being rescued? On page 203 of the package is a tax break for the one percent (NYT, 3/27/20). It benefits real estate investors with more than $500,000 annual income.

This ripoff for the capitalist bosses will cost the government $170 billion over ten years, which is nearly one tenth of the $2 trillion. Among the real estate bosses who will benefit are many family members and cronies of President Trump. The law also establishes a $500 billion slush fund for capitalist corporations. The capitalist bosses say this ripoff is a Coronavius rescue package. But most of the benefits are for the bosses. For workers, it will be too little, too late, and gone too soon. Many Black, Latin, and women workers will be left out. We are the ones suffering the most risk and worst impacts of the Coronavius pandemic.

To safeguard workers, we need a system that actually provides for our needs and is run by the workers. That system is called communism. History shows that capitalist politicians, be they Republicans, Democrats, or social democrats, will never vote to get rid of capitalism. And even if they did, the bosses would use their armies to defend capitalism. We need to overthrow capitalism and build a communist society.

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### CORRECTION

The 4/1 issue of CHALLENGE contained a grave layout error. Two letters were accidently merged together, rending them incoherent. We reprint one of them here. Please check *www.plp.org* for a corrected digital issue of CHALLENGE (4/1).

## Cuomo, just the hero the liberal fascists need right now

NY Governor Andrew Cuomo is no friend to the working class. He never has been and he never will be. He has attacked everything from wages, to housing, to health care and education for workers. His reassurances ring hollow to people suddenly unemployed and left to fend for themselves and their families in crowded apartments or required to risk their health to keep the supplies flowing to those who can afford them. This crisis is wreaking havoc on the working class from which millions will never recover.

When Cuomo speaks his aim is to give permission from the state to lament the mass sacrificing of the poorest section of the working class but to trust that there is no other way. His goal is to bind his audience with him in carrying out the atrocities of capitalism. That is reminiscent of previous fascist leaders.

"No people ever recognize their dictator in advance," reflected an American journalist Dorothy Thompson in 1935 as she realized that she had misjudged Hitler. "He never stands for election on the platform of dictatorship.

He always represents himself as the instrument [of] the incorporated National Will." Applying the lesson to the U.S., she wrote, "When our dictator turns up you can depend on it that he will be one of the boys and he will stand for everything traditionally American." (smithsonianmag.com 12/13/2016)

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## I remember Joan

The obituary on comrade Joan Heymont (3/18) was right on the mark. She was a true communist through and through. I met Joan 57 years ago when she joined the Progressive Labor Movement. She was a member of our first PLM "trade union" club and its successor in the Progressive Labor Party. As a teacher, she brought the need for communist revolution to literally thousands of students and teachers.

I remember the many delicious Thanksgiving feasts which she and her comrade husband Paul prepared and to which scores of friends, neighbors, and Party comrades were invited. It was a joy to meet their family when we were all camping in Acadia National Park in the 1960s.

Yes, she will be missed but her influence and actions on behalf of the working class will be treasured forever.

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## China bosses contain Covid-19 with fascism

As a Progressive Labor Party communist and an epidemiologist who has spent many years studying how racism and capitalism kill people, I knew CHALLENGE would be clear on how capitalists, with their drive to increase profits, destroy health care. Pandemics, like Covid-19, largely result from capitalism.

Yet the responses of China and Italy, though both implemented by imperialist billionaire rulers, are not the same. If the numbers are true, we need to consider why Italy has already (as of March 28) had about three times as many deaths as China, despite having 1/20th the population. Spain has also surpassed China in deaths, and the U.S. will as well soon. Why?

With more fully developed fascism, the Chinese ruling class can discipline their whole population to organize the world's leading manufacturing and construction industries, producing huge quantities of lab tests, protective equipment for health workers, and building new hospitals in a few days, even if some individual capitalists lose out in the process.

But it's the workers who are doing these heroic feats of production, while tolerating the quarantine measures that sometimes resulted in food shortages and insufficient medical care. From my friends in China, I understand that when their government declared a "war on the virus" many threw themselves into the fight. There is, I believe, still some collective memory of a time when the Chinese "Communist" Party really was communist, when the CCP had led the 1949 revolution to kick out the capitalist Nationalist Party and its Western imperialist allies. The CCP then established socialism, with dignity and a livelihood for a billion workers. That time is long gone.

Many workers now understand that the CCP today restored capitalism betraying the revolution and the equality it had created. A "neo-Maoist" movement in China has challenged these CCP capitalists in recent years – and has been harshly suppressed by the Chinese state security. But many workers in China still see CCP as competent, particularly in a crisis, and workers respond. But to build a new hospital in five days requires mobilization of capital as well as labor. In China, the government required all necessary resources to be mobilized, so the construction workers had the equipment, materials and organization needed to build that hospital.

However, to believe that workers in China are just doing what they are told because they fear the police would be to seriously misread the situation. To retain legitimacy the Chinese rulers have skillfully used nationalism. Because they have been able to present themselves as the worthy successors to the revolutionaries who built New China after 1949, their calls for sacrifice are not scoffed at the way we scoff at leaders in most Western capitalist countries. This has made a response to the pandemic possible in ways we can't imagine in Milan or New York. It also means the CCP could probably mobilize hundreds of millions for imperialist war. Demagogues in the U.S. talk about the "China virus" in an attempt to build anti-Asian racism with that war in mind.

It's good to know that there are still real communist workers in China. Some have been driven underground by Chinese security police, and are strong internationalists and anti-imperialists. As world war between the U.S. and China looms, the work by real communists in all countries, including the U.S. and China, will be key to saving lives. A clear-eyed understanding of the lethal danger of nationalism, and an uncompromising fight to unite workers of all nations against our common enemy, racist capitalism, is the only hope to survive that worst of all pandemics, inter-imperialist world war.

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*All workers should continue to question capitalism. Remember that our labour produces everything—food, buildings, solutions.*

### Questions From a Worker Who Reads

Bertolt Brecht, 1935
Who built Thebes of the 7 gates ?
In the books you will read the names of kings.
Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock ?
And Babylon, many times demolished,
Who raised it up so many times ?
In what houses of gold glittering Lima did its builders live ?
Where, the evening that the Great Wall of China was finished, did the
masons go?
Great Rome is full of triumphal arches.
Who erected them ?
Over whom did the Caesars triumph ?
Had Byzantium, much praised in song, only palaces for its inhabitants ?
Even in fabled Atlantis, the night that the ocean engulfed it,
The drowning still cried out for their slaves.
The young Alexander conquered India.
Was he alone ?
Caesar defeated the Gauls.
Did he not even have a cook with him ?
Philip of Spain wept when his armada went down.
Was he the only one to weep ?
Frederick the 2nd won the 7 Years War.
Who else won it ?
Every page a victory.
Who cooked the feast for the victors ?
Every 10 years a great man.
Who paid the bill ?
So many reports.
So many questions.

# Transit workers must drive towards a communist world

**Continued from page 4**

Lack of access to these tests means the real numbers of infected could be even much higher than the MTA's numbers, spreading the disease and not even knowing it. Foye can take as much time as he needs to recover.

Unfortunately, workers will have to come in without even knowing they have the virus, since testing is virtually impossible for us to acquire, if we don't feel ill.

More are calling in sick by the day, forcing more service cuts and fewer trains, which leads to heavier ridership and more crowds—a breeding ground for Covid-19. The racist bosses don't care about forcing their workers and customers to suffer as long as they can save a buck and themselves.

In furthering its efforts to appear protective of workers, MTA recently implemented "social distancing" rules for crews to abide by. We have to maintain six feet from one another, which is virtually impossible to do, given how small many of our crew rooms and locker facilities are.

The MTA has changed the regular weekday train schedule to a modified Saturday schedule—because multiple crews are incapacitated—the rooms have become even more crowded. Under capitalism, being sick is a profit scheme for the bosses.




### Liberate transit system with communism

The MTA continues to put profits over workers' lives, and it is crafting an angry and fearful atmosphere here. Many of us are wondering when, not if, we'll come into contact with someone who has the virus. Chances are we already have.

We've had to take things into our own hands, buying our own cleaning supplies, and hoping that shields us. RTO, the MTA's train division, people are booking sick as a form of protest, along with being legitimately ill.

Some bus operators sectioned off their front sections, essentially giving free rides, as people entered from the back door. This was before the agency made it an official policy for now.

These modest actions by workers show that workers can and will work in the interest of serving our class.

But the ruling class wants us afraid, so we wont organize as one. We can't have reliance on their stooges, like Governor Andrew Cuomo, who is cutting Medicaid from the state budget during this emergency.

Transit workers and riders will continue suffering under these racist crooks until we come together and fightback collectively for our health, and eventually, for a communist revolution!✪

# RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from the capitalist press that might be of use for our readers

NYT=New York Times

GW= Guardian Weekly

### WILDCAT! Workers strike vs. bosses' virulent conditions

NYT, 3/31 — Millions of…supermarket cashiers, pharmacists, warehouse workers, bus drivers, meatpacking workers…still have to report to work each day…and are putting their lives on the line…by working in places…[that] have not been adequately sanitized against the virus….

…[So] workers have set off a burst or walkouts, sickouts and wildcat strikes.

Workers at Instacart, the grocery delivery service, held a strike…demanding that the company provide hazard pay and more personal protective supplies. Workers at an Amazon warehouse on Staten Island walked out because the company did not did not close the building and thoroughly clean it after several workers tested positive for the Coronavius. And a workers group at Whole Foods has called for a tike…to demand hazard pay, the temporary closure of any sore where a worker tests positive, and more generous health coverage and sick leave.

…After a mechanic tested positive , more than half the workers at Bath Iron Workers, a shipyard in Maine, stayed home from work to pressure their employer to thoroughly clean the shipyard. Workers walked out at a Fiat Chrysler truck plant in Warren Mich. because there was no hot water for washing up. Bus drivers in Birmingham, Alabama, went on strike because…not enough was being done to protect them from contracting the Coronaviusfrom infected passengers, and bus drivers is Detroit staged a sudden sickout for the same reason. Sanitation workers in Pittsburgh engaged in a work stoppage over their Coronavius worries.

"We want better equipment, protective gear. We have no masks," one [said]… "We want hazard pay…"

…Companies are taking them and their safety for granted, and they don't want to risk their lives for a paycheck, often a meager one…..

"We're not getting nothing — no type of compensation,…no cleanliness, no extra pay," said Kendaliyn Granville, who led a strike by 50 workers at a Purdue poultry plant in Kathleen, Ga. "We're up here risking our life for chicken…." while chief executives earn millions….

This month, 20 workers walked out at a McDonalds in Cicero, Ill., out of frustration that their restaurant's management was balking at giving them paid…sick leave….The walkout jolted management into agreeing… workers obtain paid sick leave….

…When workers flex their collective muscles, their actions have gotten results. In Birmingham, the transportation authority limited the number of passengers to 19, blocked off front seats and had passengers enter and exit only by the rear access.

Purdue …had stepped up its sanitation efforts….includ[ing] a more thorough cleaning of common areas, the cafeteria and locker rooms at the Georgia poultry plant….

With the pandemic extending its reach, there certainly will be more walkouts.

### Roosevelt's New Deal, Johnson, Nixon, Reagan, Clinton: architects of racism

NYT, 3/15 — Why does the United States suffer the highest poverty rate?....The highest teen pregnancy rate? Why are so many Americans addled by opioids?....

There are few greater heroes to liberals than Franklin Roosevelt….

But to win support of Southern Democrats, Roosevelt[s']…New Deal excluded non-whites. The Federal Housing Administration…is celebrated for expanding homeownership, but it…refused to back loans in predominantly black neighborhoods, or for black people period.

New Deal labor codes allowed businesses to offer whites a first crack at jobs and authorized lower pay scales for blacks….Social Security and the Fair Labor Standards Act excluded domestic and farm jobs, which employed two out of three black workers….

America turned against welfare in favor of…prison….Johnson declared a war on crime;…Nixon…declared…declared a…war on drugs.

Race was the heart of Nixon's vision. "You have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks," he declared…."The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to.

By the 1980s, Ronald Reagan was…asserting that taxpayers were being defrauded by undeserving black "welfare queens." In 1996 Bill Clinton…ended "welfare as we know it…with a block grant to states, which could withhold aid as they was fit….

…The suffering is not limited to communities of color. Much of white America, the part addled by opioids, ravaged by suicide, despairing of a future, is also a victim….

…The United States…still doesn't provide its citizens comprehensive, universal health care…. Racial animosity is the root of all this.

### Profits drove world's richest capitalist country to run out of 75¢ face masks

NYT, 3/26 — Why is the United States running out of face masks for medical workers? How does the world's wealthiest country find itself in such a…mess?....

…For want of a 75-cent face mask, the kingdom was lost.

….Running out of protective gear involves a…set of capitalist pathologies — the rise and inevitable lure of low-cost overseas manufacturing….

Hospitals began to run out of masks for the same reason that supermarkets ran out of toilet paper — because their "just-in-line" supply chains, which call for holding little inventory, are built to optimize….low cost.

# BOSSES TERRORIZE, WORKERS ORGANIZE

It is suicidal for the working class to rely on the capitalist state to take care of us. We must do it ourselves. As the Coronavius pandemic rages across continents, the bosses' state is designed to protect only the capitalist's own interests. It's plainer than ever that "national unity," the idea that a country's capitalists and workers share common interests, is a dangerous myth. There is no "we" here—it is only us and them, our class versus the rulers, the people who produce value against the people who own value. The bosses are unleashing their state apparatus, from local cops to the federal Centers for Disease Control, to come to the aid of their class. Big and Small Fascists across the globe are releasing unlimited resources to prop up their failing economies. They may or may not succeed. But once thing is clear: The bosses' state can never serve workers' needs.

PLP is calling on all workers to take responsibility for the international working class in this urgent period. At the same time, we must respect the limits of the moment. Our challenge is to fight for the needs of our class and a communist society while still taking the precautions necessary to guard the health of our members, friends, families, and class.

## The bosses' self-serving state

The cost of keeping capitalism afloat drains the lion's share of society's resources. In caring for the most vulnerable worker, the bosses' state is missing in action. The responsibility is left to charities, non-profits, and members of our own class.

As we enter the eye of the pandemic, instead of ensuring that people get decent health care, enough food, and a safe place to live, the bosses are focused on business loans, tax breaks, and profits. Crumbs are passed out to the working class as the rulers' broken health care system builds morgues.

Do they have enough ventilators or even enough one-dollar respirator masks? No. President Donald Trump and New York Governor Andrew Cuomo are busy blaming each other for shortages that are killing health care workers and forcing involuntary DNRs. But the fact is that every president and every governor for the last 20 years has been warned about these shortfalls. Instead of investing in adequate stockpiles for a pandemic they knew was coming, they decided to let people die instead (Intercept, 3/24).

Do they have enough hospital beds or ICU beds? No. To preserve capitalist profits, liberal governors like Cuomo cut beds with a vengeance. In New York City, now the world's Coronavius epicenter, 20 hospitals have been closed since 2003.

Essentially, the bosses are giving workers two options: Stay home and lose your job and possibly die alone, or ignore the pandemic and risk your life to keep working.

## Bosses' crisis response: fascist genocide

As they scramble to try to save their system, the bosses are looking to abandon or kill the unprofitable segments of the working class: children, the disabled, the elderly. Trump's buddy, Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, proposed that people in their 70s and up should "take a chance on your survival in exchange for keeping the America that all America loves…" (vanityfair.com, 3/24). In other words, older people can and should be sacrificed to restore the capitalists' profit machine and return to business as usual.

This is the essence of fascism, the Nazis' Third Reich formula: fostering unity with the ruling class to slaughter those groups the bosses no longer need. It's how workers in Germany came to look the other way as concentration camps were built and became slaughterhouses. Today, Franklin Graham's tents are going up in New York's Central Park to warehouse the sick and dying. Tomorrow, it's not a stretch to envision them as a prototype for U.S. death camps. The German fascists' Final Solution wasn't the product of Hitler's madness. It reflected the cold and calculated needs of the German capitalists to preserve their system in an existential economic crisis.

If we continue to go along with this genocidal agenda, eventually the whole working class will be consumed.

## Workers met with confusion and violence

As the Coronavius rages, workers are being forced into confusing and contradictory situations. Many are still expected to commute to work, pay their bills, and care for their families, despite the rising rate of infection and government mandates to stay home or stay socially distanced.

Instead of taking responsibility for the failures of their system, the bosses unleash violence against our class. In New York City, the subways are crowded in working-class neighborhoods because many people have no paid sick leave and can't feed their families if they shelter in place (New York Times, 3/30). In India, baton-wielding police are beating workers in the street who violate Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 21-day lockdown (3/25, NY Post). Around the globe, stiff fines and jail time are threatened against workers who don't comply.

## The working class is fighting back

The positive news is that the working class is rebelling against bosses throwing us into the fire. Workers at Trader Joe's are unionizing after being denied gloves on the job (Buzzfeed, 3/18). Instacart, Amazon, and Whole Foods workers are striking for Coronavius protections and hazard pay (USA Today, 3/30). Black sanitation workers in Pittsburg are refusing to do pick-ups without better safety protection (Vibe, 3/25). Many of us have no choice but to work during these dangerous times, whether it's to pay our bills or serve other workers. But that doesn't mean we can't fight for safety protections or protest on behalf of our class.

The capitalists chose not to prepare for a crisis they knew was coming. Now they're giving us advice—or police-enforced orders—that presume that everyone lives in a small nuclear family in a spacious home with an ample financial safety net. "Shelter in place" is a death sentence for those whom the profit system has already failed: the homeless, multiple families crowded into small apartments, elderly poor living alone or in unsanitary old age homes, low-wage workers in single rooms in cut-up houses, immigrants who fear deportation if they seek medical care, incarcerated workers penned up by the racist criminal injustice system. The millions of refugees and migrant workers around the world who have no homes at all are completely abandoned. For the working class, capitalism is truly hopeless.

## How communists would handle a health crisis

A communist society serves the needs of the people. It develops its greatest resource: the power and knowledge of the international working class. Once the profit system is smashed, all resources will go toward workers' needs.

In a communist society, the state would protect the most vulnerable. In extreme circumstances, the healthiest people would enlist to care for the sick. Child care would be a collective task, along with distributing food and necessities—without cost.

We can do some of these things right now. Organize friends and neighbors to take care of those in need. Organize protests against unsafe conditions and attacks on the working class. But keep safety in mind at all times. Do everything possible remotely. If you must go out to work or to serve our class, keep a safe distance. Otherwise stay in. Covid-19 is dangerous, and the bosses' health care system can't be trusted.

The working class can seize this opportunity to progress toward communist revolution and a workers' state. But it will require our placing more confidence in our class and our Party, and breaking with the bosses' state once and for all. Our choice is clear: Either face mass death under capitalism, or fight for communism.✪

### What Is the State?

The State is the mechanism of class dictatorship. Under capitalism, the State is ruled by capitalists and designed to serve the ruling capitalist class. To keep this system intact, the capitalist bosses control the police, courts, and prisons, and also the media, the schools, and the military.

When the capitalist bosses are smashed by communism, the role of the State will change. Under communism, the State's role will be to serve the needs of the working class and to protect our class interests. As communists in Progressive Labor Party, we believe that leaders are those workers who accept more responsibility. Under communism, there will be no special privileges or hierarchies. And since money will be abolished, no one will "earn" more than anyone else. Decisions will be made by workers to benefit the entire, international working class.